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Exposition of Proceedings of the Society  
of Friends . 1853

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AN EXPOSITION

OF THE

PROCEEDINGS OF CERTAIN MEETINGS

PROFESSING TO BE OF

THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS,

OF THE ORTHODOX PARTY.

AGAINST CERTAIN OF ITS MEMBERS,

FOR THEIR INTEREST IN THE SUBJECT OF

SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATIONS,

IN WHICH SUCH MANIFESTATIONS ARE PROVEN TO BE  
CONSISTENT WITH QUAKERISM.

PHILADELPHIA.

1853.



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## INTRODUCTION.

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THOSE whose names are attached to the following pages consider themselves to have been wrongfully treated, and irregularly and inconsistently disowned from membership with the Society of Friends, in a manner unwarranted by its discipline.

For the purpose of giving to their many personal acquaintances, and, as far as may be, to the members of the Society in general, an idea of their true position in relation to the charges preferred against them, as well as to expose error and absurdity, even though it be found amongst those making high profession, they thus consent to come out in a public statement, and reluctantly relate facts and circumstances, some of which may seem to be of a private character.

It is natural for them to feel much delicacy in entering into minute detail; but having nought of which to feel ashamed, other than the common weakness of humanity, and conscious that the truth cannot appear to their disadvantage, as much as the errors already circulated, they solicit the indulgence of their readers in what may appear an excess of minutia.

The course they propose to pursue in this Exposition is,

First, to exhibit the charges made against them, and endeavor to ascertain their true meaning;

Second, to state the facts and circumstances upon which those charges were founded;

Third, to give an account of the disciplinary proceedings under them; and, finally, to conclude with a discussion of the propriety of those proceedings.

## EXPOSITION.

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THE following is a correct copy, *verbatim et literatim*, of the charges (that of the males and females being separate as usual) preferred in Hockessin Preparative Meeting, held Sixth month 3 d, 1852.

They are ungrammatical in their language, irregular and obscure in their construction, and may foreshow, to the intelligent reader, a good picture of the ignorance manifested in the whole of the procedures.

They read thus: "Hockessin Preparative Meeting informs that J. C. J. and J. G. J., E. J., and J. J. G., attend an association called Spiritual Knockers. They admit of music at their assemblies, and profess to hold communion with departed spirits, and *has*, for a long time, *almost neglected* the attendance of our meetings."

This charge, although ambiguous in its language, and rendered more so by the explanations of those undertaking to treat with us upon it, means, we may safely presume,

First, to accuse us with attending the meetings, and identifying ourselves with an association of *persons* termed, in ridicule, Spiritual Knockers;

Second, that we, in conjunction with said association, admit of music at our assemblies, and profess to hold communion with departed spirits;

And third, that we have for a long time been neglectful in the attendance of meetings.

In regard to the second division of the charge, it may here be remarked, that when we denied having advanced in our investigations so far as to be willing to make the profession of communing with departed spirits, we were told by the committee that the charge did not mean *us*, but that the association made this profession. Still it must be evident, we think, to the critical reader, that the real inference is as above stated.

Having thus arrived at the true meaning of the several accusations, we proceed to state the facts upon which they were founded.

Early in the autumn of the year 1851, a small portion of the inhabitants of Hockessin and adjacent parts of Newcastle County, Del., through personal observation, the reading of published

accounts, and various other causes, became interested in determining the truth or falsity of alleged spiritual manifestations.

In a social consultation, at the house of one of their number, it was agreed that they should meet together alternately at each other's residences, form what is termed a "*Circle*," and endeavor to give the subject a fair examination, by fulfilling, as far as they were able, the conditions said to be necessary for the purpose by those who had pursued the path before them. It may here be proper to explain, briefly, that such a "*circle*" is formed merely by a number of persons seating themselves around a table, sometimes joining their hands to allow of the passage of the "*vital-electric current*," so called, and entertaining themselves by reading, conversation, appropriate vocal or instrumental music, or by silent reflection, as seemed for the time most pleasant, the professed object being to cultivate a contented, tranquil, harmonious uniting of the minds present in one channel of thought, such being the conditions considered the most favorable for promoting the success of the experiment.

But here let it be distinctly understood, that the persons thus associating did not look upon their meetings as being held for religious worship, or in any especial religious capacity, but simply for the investigation of natural truths from obvious facts and phenomena which they might witness. In obedience to the injunction, "try all things, hold fast to that which is good," they joined in the examination with singleness of purpose, having no desire to deceive either themselves or others.

It is true that all natural science may be deemed to have, in one light, a religious bearing, as revealing to us the laws of that great universe "whose body nature is, and God the soul;" but other than in this light, we repeat, the association was not a religious one. It is true, also, that the persons associated were not of those who fear to examine nature, lest they meet with something that will overthrow long-cherished opinions, or controvert established truth; neither were they of those who think mankind have attained to that perfection of knowledge, or that fruition of happiness, which precludes the acquirement of further knowledge, upon which to build hopes of yet greater perfection both in wisdom and happiness; but rather were they of those who, having full faith in the wisdom and goodness of the all-controlling Power, and in the unity and oneness of his great creation, have a freedom to investigate, as far as their slender powers might suffice, the laws of that creation in which the visible and outward appear ever subject to the invisible and inward, whether those laws be the laws of matter or the laws of mind.

At the primary consultation above-mentioned, every individual included in the charge, agreed to try attending the Association, excepting two persons, E. J. and J. J. G. The latter of whom was absent from home, and did not return for some months afterwards, and never has been other than a casual attender of the "Circle." E. J. openly declined giving her attendance, expressing "that she was not yet prepared to join with them." J. G. J. after attending a few times, found it more of a tax upon his time, and more inconvenient in other respects than was anticipated, and at a meeting of the "Circle," to which his wife, E. J., accompanied him, publicly declined continuing a member of the Association.

In the course of a few months, what were considered by some as spiritual influences, began to be manifested at the meetings, and curiosity, to a considerable extent, became awakened. About the second month, 1852, owing to circumstances, not needful here to relate, E. J. was accidentally present with the members of the Association, and sat down with them. It was after having been, for a few minutes, seated in this "Circle," into the company of which she was thus unexpectedly thrown, contrary to her expressed intentions at the time, that she became influenced by that very invisible power, which formed the subject of examination. What that power was it is not our object now to discuss; suffice it, that the influence, being once attained, continued its operation, and seemed mostly present with her, both when alone in the attendance upon household duties, or in our quiet family circle. It was accompanied by much peace and satisfaction of mind, and a frequent expression of a full assurance that all would be right in the end. Notwithstanding a being thus under preparation for what is termed a "Medium," she still declined the attendance of the "Circle," and when induced by the solicitation of friends, to attend for a few times, was always confirmed in the impression, frequently expressed, that it was *her place to remain quiet at home*.

This quiet course has accordingly been continued in, with very few exceptions, to the present time. In the face of these facts, which have been duly and frequently represented, it is marvellous to us, how those who profess "to place judgment in the authority of truth," can persevere, especially in the case of E. J., to maintain a charge against her of identifying herself with the offensive Association, or for uniting with that, with which her own mind was not free to unite, but which she openly and publicly declined.

To continue: after being subject for a few weeks to the preparing influence above spoken of, while one day seated entirely



alone, her hand assumed a peculiar motion, and was made to spell out on a card containing the alphabet, "*Have faith in God, my child,*" which short sentence was subscribed in the same manner, "*Thy mother.*" On the evening of the same day, in presence of other members of the family, the same influence was manifest, the same peculiar motion of the hand appeared, and communications of a most striking character seemed forced from the medium, in a manner, and accompanied by a holy solemnity which produced temporary conviction, at least, in the mind of every person present, that the impressions were from an unseen intelligence. The influence then changed its character to that of one stronger and more decided, gave some short sentences, and concluded with, "*My dear grandchild, love the truth, so as to live in glory here with us,*" subscribing the name of "*Thy grandfather Parker,*" meaning John Parker, formerly of Parkersville, Chester County, Pa., a noted minister of the Society of Friends. From that time until the present, we have had, through the mediumship of E. J., in our own family, many communications or impressions from influences purporting to be that of different deceased persons, many of which are of a beautiful character, advising, amongst other matter, a faithful yielding to the exercise of her gift and a perseverance in her course.

Notwithstanding having been thus favored, as we incline to esteem it, yet, such has been our caution in the investigation of these things, that, although, at times, conviction seemed irresistible, yet at other times contradictions and inconsistencies became apparent, and, as in all earthly things, the good and true seems so mixed with the false and unreal, that we still occupy the ground of inquirers, unwilling as yet to declare to the world that we are fully satisfied as to the nature of what we experience.

Such then is our position in regard to the subject, the position of *investigators*, and such it was distinctly defined to be to the overseers who visited us, preparatory to the charge being carried to the Preparative Meeting. They were told that we had the subject under examination; that our minds were not made up; that as far as we had gone we were satisfied with our course, and believed it right to pursue it until we discovered its fallacy, or proved its truth.

If then our interest in the subject of spiritual communion with the departed be the main point of the charge, which it is acknowledged to be, is it not, ironically speaking, a beautiful position for the Society of Friends, or any other society, to occupy in the nineteenth century, to persecute its members for the investigation of the truth or falsehood of any subject in which they claim an interest!

Such a course was enough for the age of Popish darkness and priestly bigotry, in which the aged philosopher Galileo, for his discoveries in astronomical science, was made, under terror of bodily inquisitorial torture, to kneel in the presence of his blind persecutors, who considered his discoveries contrary to Scripture relation, and disavowed the truth of what he had demonstrated, and which modern science has established upon a basis firm and incontrovertible. We use the term persecuted, because the present proceedings were prompted by the same spirit of unenlightened intolerance as appeared in cases like the above; restrained and moderated by the better tone of the present age, for we anticipate being able to show, in the course of this exposition, that we were not treated as discipline requires, with justice, forbearance and impartiality, accompanied by a laboring to convince our minds of error, but with a hasty preformed judgment, stubbornly and blindly determined to carry through and maintain formal charges without regard to truth or consistency, merely because the subject of examination was deemed by the actors contrary to their notions of what *should* be true.

As touching the last or third count of the indictment, we plead guilty of having been slack for a considerable time in the attendance of meetings; but did not entirely neglect them until we were improperly attacked for our interest in the subject of Spiritual Manifestations. Towards our slackness we might reasonably have asked much forbearance; our meetings were small and weak, and somewhat disunited: some there were with whom we did not feel sufficient unity to be drawn to hold religious communion with them, and when opposition to our rights commenced, it would hardly be expected that we should seek the company of those by whom we were misunderstood, and who manifested towards us no proper spirit. But let these excuses pass, while we relate what has been the practice of the meeting heretofore. In the Hockessin branch, one of its members, convenient and able to attend, had altogether neglected the meeting for perhaps twenty years. His case, probably for appearance sake, which only made the partiality more conspicuous, was taken up at the same meeting with our own. Others, again, who had been present at fewer meetings than ourselves, for the six months previous to our charge, have not yet been brought under disciplinary censure. In the Kennet branch, we may in particular note two members, in the prime of life, who very seldom attend meetings and yet remain as members.

Our discipline requires that offenders be dealt with "without partiality or unnecessary delay," and therefore it appears, as touching the only portion of the charge to which three of our

number plead partially guilty, the meetings have exhibited the grossest inconsistency; and have transgressed, to a greater degree the letter and spirit of the discipline in prosecuting us to disownment, under the circumstances, than we transgressed it in our neglect of meetings.

Having now exhibited the charges and also the circumstances upon which they were founded, we proceed to state the disciplinary proceedings connected with them.

Shortly after the fifth-month monthly meeting, 1852, we had a preliminary visit from four overseers, only one of whom was a member of our own preparatory meeting. The conversations that were had are not sufficiently well remembered to give a regular statement of them. Thus much may be said of the one with J. G. J. and E. J., that, upon inquiry, they were told, as above related, that we were examining the subject of "Spiritual Manifestations;"—that we had gone so far as to believe it right for us to persevere until our minds were satisfied. They, on their part, expressed opinions that it was a dangerous subject and advised us against it; which opinions, as being formed without sufficient knowledge, we did not feel bound to respect. A remark being made that their object was information (a very laudable one), we offered to read them some of the professed communications, to throw light upon the subject and enable them to judge of its nature. Three of their number expressed a willingness to hear them, but were overruled by the fourth, who did not want to know anything about them, having "a testimony to bear against them whether he understood them or not."

We further distinctly explained, in this preliminary conversation, that we were not members of the Association or Circle.

The conversation with J. J. G., when called upon, amounted to the expression of this question: "Well J., is thee going with J. and A.?" And this is all the *labor* that was ever bestowed upon her previous to taking her case to the meeting. In like manner, this one visit included all the efforts made to convince us of error, unless a very casual conversation on the subject with one of the overseers be entitled to consideration. Now, besides objecting to the want of those patient and intelligent efforts to convince our judgments which the discipline of the Society requires, we take especial exception to thus being judged without a knowledge of the nature of our faults—this "bearing of a testimony without understanding." It is an error often made by ignorant and weak-minded professors of spiritual discernment, and in opposition, not only to common sense but to the spirit of our discipline, inasmuch as that discipline expressly

requires offenders to be dealt with "in order to the convince-ment of his or her understanding," and it being manifestly impossible, for any one, to labor effectively in such a case, unless their own minds have a clear conception of the nature of the alleged transgression. We are not amongst those who would over-estimate the value of mere literary acquirements, but we do contend that it becomes a point of duty first to use our natural powers in obtaining all the knowledge possible to be acquired upon any matter to be judged, whereby the reasoning faculties (divinely illumined if so be the inquirer is thus favored) may be the better able to arrive at a correct judgment. Human knowledge, divinely sanctified, is ever preferable to sanctified human ignorance. The ancient fable of first putting our own shoulder to the wheel and then calling upon Jupiter to assist us, may further illustrate our meaning. It seems little short of an undervaluing of gifts already conferred;—a tempting of the Holy Spirit, thus blindly to expect the revealing of that judgment for which we should first diligently labor as far as in us lies; a presumption which is often suffered to be punished, as in the present instance, by a mistaken conclusion, drawn from erroneous impressions and prejudices existing in the mind. These views, we repeat, appear consistent with common sense and every-day practice, with Quakerism and with Christianity; and if more frequently reflected upon would prevent many an unwarranted assumption of spiritual discernment, which existed only in a perverted self-love or a disordered imagination.

Another absurd position taken by at least one of the accusers might be pointed out in this connexion. In defence of their zealous haste in the matter, it was said that "the very newspapers cried out against it." This kind of evidence seems new to be adduced as ground of action in the Society of Friends, and is, withal, the weakest of the weak. May we not suppose—nay, is it not certain that, in the origin of our Society, had such journals been numerous as in this day, they would have teemed with the ridicule and denunciations of the interested opposers of Quakerism. Would not Christianity itself! and, indeed, has not every step in human progress since the world began, been taken in despite of bitter opposition? so much so, that the very opposition to a cause is not only strong presumptive evidence in favor of its goodness, but, in the degree of bitterness displayed, may be found a measure of the final utility of that cause.

A few weeks subsequent to the above described preliminary proceeding, we were informed by the overseers that our cases would be taken to the next preparative meeting. Upon inquiry by J. G. J. of one of the informers, what they were going to



charge us with, he seemed doubtful, but believed it was "for attending the meetings of this Circle." J. G. J. replied that himself and wife did not attend them. "But," said he, "you are in unity with them." "Yes," was the answer, "we are in unity with them when they do what we think is right, and in disunity when, according to our notions, they are wrong;" the meaning conveyed being that there was no especial unity or disunity in the case, other than under conditions creating unity, to a limited extent, with any portion of mankind.

The accused attended the preparative meeting, at which the charges were produced, and explained what parts of them were incorrect in fact, and why the remainder were partial and contrary to the usual practice of the meeting. The preparative meeting presented very singular features; the male department consisting only of the two overseers or "accusers," J. C. J. and J. G. J., the two accused, and two other members to judge the case. Of the only two members who were neither accusers nor accused, one expressed decided opposition to the proceeding as hasty and irregular, and the other, though more neutral, showed by his language that he also did not approve of the course; notwithstanding which one of the accusers carried it through, saying that nine overseers had decided the case should go on to the monthly meeting, and it would have to go; by which it appeared that the preparative meeting was to be controlled in its action by a self-constituted caucus of overseers. The women's meeting consisted of but two members besides the accused parties, who both signified in the meeting they had nothing to do with the matter, yet the charge passed irregularly through in a somewhat similar manner. In the meeting, J. G. J. requested an official copy of the charge, the right to which was there expressly acceded, and yet no steps were taken either by the preparative or monthly meeting to furnish the copy, and he was never able to obtain one except indirectly through another person.

We ask particular attention to these proceedings. According to the discipline of the Society, the power of forwarding charges against members to the monthly meetings for trial, lies only in the preparative meetings, and not in any number of overseers; and it is manifestly proper it should be so. The accused, who are to be duly notified, have the right of attending those primary meetings and advocating their own cause, being present to correct any false accusations that may appear against them. The founders of Friends' discipline considered it no light matter to implicate members, and wisely arranged that they should be heard in their own defence before being formally arraigned. In this instance, however, nine overseers had decided the matter from

rumor and hearsay evidence, without the presence of the accused parties and a knowledge of the real facts of the case; and their decision was to be as the "laws of the Medes and Persians:"—the charges must go on, whether true or false, or whether the proper body approved of them or not; because, forsooth, they had so decided it. Geology, and its kindred sciences, prove that our earth was once inhabited by monsters which have long since ceased to exist, and are represented but by faint types in the animals of the present day. So it is in the moral world; the fearful power that was formerly exercised by Popes, Cardinals, Bishops, and Inquisitors, in their secret conclaves, has in a degree passed away, yet we have, in this private judging caucus a faint remaining type, comparatively powerless for evil, it is true, but the same in principle and the same in justice. We contend, therefore, that if the discipline of the Society is to be our guide, the whole of the proceedings are built upon a rotten foundation, and even if correct in every other respect, they cannot be sustained on that account alone. It may be pleaded in excuse for such irregularities that the preparative meeting was weak and unable to act in the premises, but this does not mend the matter. In such case it should have been strengthened by a committee from the monthly meeting, sitting with it in a regular capacity, before whom the accused could appear and be heard upon the charges.

To continue: the charges passed up to the monthly meeting, where the proceedings again met with opposition from a member, whose age, and interest in the matter, should have entitled him to respect in the expression of his views: that the proceedings were hasty; that the subject was not understood; neither had time been given for it to mature its fruits, whereby it might be judged. Such, however, was the want of that "decency, forbearance, and love for one another," in which Friends' discipline advises their meetings to be conducted, that one of the active and zealous ones interrupted his remarks, inviting him to sit down and not take up the time of the meeting.

The monthly meeting, as usual, appointed a committee to treat with the offenders, unto whom the same explanations were made as before stated. J. C. J. desires particularly to relate that in conversation with him, the committee were informed of the irregular proceedings of the preparative meeting, and that the charge of "professing to hold communion with departed spirits" was untrue in his case also. They appeared to think that such an expression was not contained in the charge, and one of their number asserted rather positively that he was mistaken. The document was then called for and a copy requested, which after

some hesitation and evident reluctance was produced, and the request complied with. Finding themselves in error in relation to the charge, the attempt was made to justify it, as it stood, but not succeeding in that, the plea was raised that the Circle made such profession, and as a member of it he would have to plead guilty of holding a similar faith. The reply was, that such an assertion was just as untrue in reference to the "Circle" as it was in relation to himself; they being likewise investigators only of the same class of phenomena. After repeated attempts to extort something which could be construed into an acknowledgment of the charge, one of the committee remarked that there appeared to be a misunderstanding of his true position; showing conclusively that the whole proceeding was based on common report, without any definite knowledge of the facts of the case. They also declined specifying upon what clause of the discipline that part of the charge relating to spiritual manifestations was founded, *professing not to be sufficiently familiar with it to determine*; and when pressed for their authority in censuring members for investigating the subject, the reply was, *that Friends were everywhere opposed to it*. One of the women's committee remarked on another occasion, by way of apology, that "if they did not take notice of the matter the yearly meeting would be down upon them." It would thus appear that public prejudice, backed by imprudent members of the yearly meeting, had forced the monthly meeting, and its committee, into a position which could not be justified by discipline, and was derogatory to the rights and rational liberty of members.

The various explanations made to the monthly meeting's committee appear to have been to little effect, since the charges were for the most part maintained, and upon their report, testimonies of disownment were issued in form, a sample whereof we here copy verbatim:

"J. G. J., who has had a right of membership in the religious Society of Friends, *has attended* meetings of an association which is termed 'Spiritual Knockers,' who admit of music at their assemblies, and *advocate the doctrine of holding communion* with departed spirits:—and has almost entirely neglected the attendance of the meetings of Friends. On which accounts he has been treated with by a committee of this meeting, who endeavored to convince him of the impropriety of his course; but he did not manifest any disposition to *discontinue the practice* or condemn his deviation, but justifies it. We therefore testify that he no longer retains a right of membership in our religious Society, yet it is our desire that he may be favored to see his error and con-

demn his deviations to the satisfaction of Friends, and be restored again into membership with us.

"Signed in and by direction of Kennet Monthly Meeting of Friends, held the 2d day of 11th mo., 1852.

"JOHN PARKER,  
"Clerk."

The testimonies are all similar in substance, excepting that in the case of J. G. J. and E. J. the past tense "has attended" is used, instead of the present "attends," which was the language of the charge, and is retained in all the others. It may be also observed that the term "advocate the doctrine" is used instead of "profess to hold communion." Those in the case of J. G. J. and E. J. will not bear the test of strict analysis, but contain a falsehood on their very face. They charge that J. G. J. and E. J. "have attended," &c., and then go on to say they "did not manifest any disposition to discontinue the practice;" whereas the truth is, it can scarce be said they were ever in the practice, and it can be made to appear they have not been at a single meeting of the Association since the charge was made, nor for some time previous.

The discussion of the propriety of the disciplinary proceedings appropriately resolves itself under two heads: errors in form, and errors in principle. Most of the formal errors have been touched upon in course of the preceding statements, but we will here briefly re-refer to, and classify them:

First: we were not fully informed of the nature of the charges before they were taken to the preparative meeting, neither were patient endeavors first made to convince us of error.

Second: neither the preparative nor monthly meeting furnished a copy of the charge minute, when requested, which was at least a failure in due courtesy.

Third: the charges were not sent to the monthly meeting by the authority of the preparative meeting, but by the authority and prejudgment of a number of overseers, before whom the accused could not appear.

Fourth: two of the testimonies contain a false statement, and all of them vary from the original charge; "has attended" at some indefinite past time being, by no means, the same as the present and active, "attends;" and "advocating the doctrine of spiritual communion," is very different from professing the practice. Although there is a clause in the discipline allowing additional offences discovered in the course of dealing with offenders, to be incorporated into the minutes and testimony, yet that clause, like all other illiberal acts, should be construed closely,



and will not imply that when any part of a charge is found to be untrue, it may be replaced by another, and the original stand an uncorrected falsehood on the minutes of the meeting. Our impression is, that if any portion of the accusation is proved erroneous, the whole must fall and the proceedings commence anew.

The errors in principle of the disciplinary proceedings next come under review, to a more full discussion of which, as being the most important and interesting, we solicit the reader's patient attention.

First, we will premise, that when any number of persons form either a social or religious compact, they do so under certain regulated or constitutional conditions, the fulfilment of which secures unto them the enjoyment of their rights as members of the association.

Societyship does not necessarily imply a similarity of views or opinions on all subjects to which, in obedience to a variety of tastes and circumstances, we may give a share of our attention, but simply to a unity of practice and sentiment upon those points that are thus made constitutionally necessary and essential by the nature of the compact. For instance, persons may hold different political views, and be attached to either of the opposite parties which divide our common country, and yet all be consistent members of the one religious association; or one may be a man of science, fond of the investigation of natural phenomena, while his fellow-members remain in ignorance of such subjects, or may even incline to censure their brother (as is, oftentimes human nature like) for his interest in what they understand not; yet, while that brother neither infringes upon the rights of his fellows, nor transgresses any part of the existing compact, his rights of membership, in justice, are secure, notwithstanding all differences of opinion on unessential points, or disparity in amount of acquired knowledge. We hold, accordingly, that, even in obedience to a majority, no portion of the Society of Friends has a right to say, as one poor overseer said, "it ought to be got out of the *meeting* whether there is discipline for it or not," but that before attempting to deprive any of its members of their rights, plain transgressions of society regulations must be shown, or otherwise unmistakably criminal or immoral acts proven. Of aught criminal or immoral we were not accused, but while speaking thus we might, as a further exhibition of inconsistency, point to a member of the same meeting who, for many years, was in the habit of drunkenness and immorality, and yet, from tenderness or regard to parental feelings, he was not testified against. Were there no parents in this case towards whom the same consideration should have been

shown?—parents who, having grown aged in the belief that the enjoyment of membership was an inestimable privilege, could not but deeply lament the hasty and partial course.

We go on to say, then, touching the first count of the indictment,—the attending the meetings of a certain association, that it is untrue in fact as relates to that part of our number heretofore specified; and that, not being for a religious purpose, it was no more a transgression of discipline in the remainder, than the attendance of a lecture, a lyceum, a political meeting, or any other collection of persons for an object disconnected from the Society capacity, unless it appeared that while attending said meetings they transgressed disciplinary regulations. Accordingly, passing to the second division of the charge, the association, those attending included, are accused of having “music at their assemblies,” and of “professing to hold communion with departed spirits.” In the Book of Discipline may be found the following clause:

“As our time passeth swiftly away, and our delight ought to be in the *law of the Lord*, it is advised that a watchful care be exercised over our youth and others, to prevent their going to stage plays, horse races, *music*, dancing, or any such vain sports and pastimes; and being concerned in lotteries, wagering, or other species of gaming.”

The spirit of this extract is sufficiently plain as against music employed for “vain sport or pastime,” which was far from the object to be attained by it in the present instance: its use, if aught of use there was in it, being rather as an assistant in the study of some of the natural “laws of the Lord” above mentioned. “I will sing with the *spirit*, and I will sing with the understanding also,” saith the apostle; and we will dare to affirm that it must have been either with the “*spirit*” or “understanding” that the singers at the circle were enabled to perform. Again, we have in Scripture, “Is any one merry, let him sing psalms,” by which it appears that occasional merriment is not always reprehensible.

While speaking of music, we cannot refrain from expressing regret that Friends do not more explicitly define their testimony in regard to it. There is naught lawful and right, but what may become criminal by excess. To object to music in the abstract, savors of Puritanism, and seems quite too rigid, since it will apply not only to its abuse as a promoter of dissipation, but alike to the song of the happy-hearted youth giving expression to an exuberance of life, to the mother soothing the slumbers of her infant, or to the preacher in the gallery who has acquired the habit of sermonizing in a sing-song tone.

Harmony seems greatly predominant in creation,—harmony of sound, harmony of motion, of form, of number, and, more than all, spiritual harmony are discoverable therein. We have faculties given unto us whereby to enjoy all these harmonies,—“there is a time for all things under the sun,” and hard is it for us to perceive that the due and appropriate gratification of the faculty that loves harmonious sound can be criminal in the sight of Him who made the birds to pour forth the fulness of their joy in warbling melody, and who, if accounts be true, has ordained the singing of praise as a source of enjoyment to the saints in heaven.

We doubt whether many members of the Society could now boast their rights had they been, in their younger and more sprightly days, as sharply dealt with as some of the present day. Here again we may point to partiality and inconsistency, it being a well-known fact, that many of the younger members of Friends indulge at times in vocal music, and that not a few, some of whom are connected with those taking part against us, might, upon good grounds, be accused of attending real “places of diversion,” and engaging in music and dancing. If we are correctly informed, some, holding official station in the meeting which disowned us, have not long since been interested attenders of political meetings, at which bands of music were used as enliveners of the scene, and to promote partisan ends.

Thus much for “the music at their assemblies.” We come now to the next item,—“they profess to hold communion with departed spirits,” concerning which there is no doubt, as before mentioned, that it is considered the great offence for which the proceedings were commenced in hot haste, and carried through, as has been shown, at the sacrifice of the common practices of the Society. It would seem, that, fearing they could not find discipline to make good their point, the other items were attached as strengtheners of their cause, but only served more plainly to show its weakness.

Although we fully believe it not inconsistent with man’s spiritual nature, under certain conditions, to hold intercourse with spirits in another life, and that many circumstances in the world’s history prove its reality; yet, as before stated, our faith in regard to what we have personally experienced, was, and is not yet sufficiently established to amount to a profession, and that, therefore, this item of charge is false in fact. One of the monthly meeting committee, in his anxiety to maintain the charge, unhandsonely stated that our denial of this point was a mere quibble; falsely, however, as can be proven by the general tone of our conversation and written remarks upon the subject. We

therefore again protest against their efforts to force us into a position upon the question which we are unwilling to occupy, and against aught being recorded and descending to posterity in which we are falsely implicated. When our views concerning these things are fully formed the world shall know them, and we will shrink from no responsibility. Had the Society of Friends have waited until we made this open profession, and then have shown, if possible, its inconsistency with their discipline; or until we had built upon it doctrines and practices contrary to their own, how upright and frank would have been their course compared with the present one, of allowing their prejudices to become excited against they knew not what, and blindly persevering in a course they themselves must have felt, at heart, ashamed of.

Having written thus, an additional denial of the charge of "professing to hold communion with departed spirits," we now take this position: admitting that we do so profess, or that we do "advocate the doctrine," it is no transgression of the discipline of Friends; it is not inconsistent with their faith; has been believed in and performed by members of the highest standing, and may moreover be considered as adopted by the Society.

We say it is not contrary to their discipline, simply because there is no clause thereof alluding to the subject. We say it is not inconsistent with their faith for the following reasons: it has been held by Friends, and we believe is sanctioned by Scripture, and by the experience of the early Christians, that in their silent meetings "in the stillness of all flesh," there is and may be a communing of spirits, a commingling, as it were, and a oneness of feeling, a "flowing from vessel to vessel," between those thus assembled, even where there is no outward expression of words. This condition of the minds present is attained, as we conceive, not by a miraculous interposition of Providence, in setting aside established laws, but by shutting out worldly things and unitedly cultivating the interior powers of the soul; whereby its intrinsic spiritual nature is partially developed, and its faculties in a measure unfolded and enjoyed as a faint foreshadowing of that more perfect life which awaits us hereafter. This enjoyment of true unity of feeling, between spirits inhabiting an earthly frame, this "flowing from vessel to vessel" is not the result of the material nature, so called, but of the spiritual, and belongs exclusively to the spirit. If, then, spirit can thus commune with spirit in the limited exercise of its undeveloped faculties, when both are fettered with mortality, how much more might it be expected, that those from whom the shackles of mortality have fallen, and who have been born into immortality, with the full exercise of their spiritual attributes—how much more, we say, is it possible for



such, when permitted, to impress properly prepared minds still living on earth, and instil into them a measure of their own spiritual life and knowledge. We contend, therefore, that the idea of such impressions is not inconsistent with the belief and profession of Quakerism, but is rather an extension—a perfecting of views already formed, resulting in an age having the advantage of *all past experience and all present knowledge*; and is no more derogatory to the doctrine of impressions from the Holy Spirit, than is the reception of counsel from properly prepared ministers living in the body.

In proof that conspicuous members of the Society have held communion with departed spirits, or believed in spiritual manifestations, we proceed to cite the following relations.

First, an extract from the testimony of Mary Pennington, concerning her deceased husband, Isaac Pennington (one of the greatest writers which the Society has ever produced), dated the 27th of 2d month, 1680, and prefixed to a volume of his writings published the same year:

“Ah me, he is gone! he that none exceeded in kindness, in tenderness, in love inexpressible to the relation as a wife. Next to the love of God in Christ Jesus to my soul, was his love precious and delightful to me. My bosom, one that was as my guide and counsellor, my pleasant companion, my tender sympathizing friend, as near to the sense of my pain, sorrow, grief and trouble as it was possible. Yet this great help and benefit is gone, and I, a poor worm, a very little one to him, compassed about with many infirmities through mercy, let him go without an unadvised word of discontent, or inordinate grief: Nay, further, such was the kindness the Lord showed to me in that hour, *that my spirit ascended with him in that very moment that his spirit left his body, and I saw him safe in his own mansion, and rejoiced with him, and was at that instant gladder of it, than ever I was of enjoying him in the body. And from this sight my spirit returned again to perform my duty to his outward tabernacle, to the answer of a good conscience.*

“This testimony to dear J. P. is from the greatest loser of all who had a share in his life.

“MARY PENNINGTON.”

This quaint but interesting relation is given, it will be perceived, by a cotemporary of Fox, and Penn, and others of the founders of the Society, and is valuable as showing that it was not at least inconsistent with early Quakerism, to profess the possibility of a spirit's being enabled, temporarily, to depart from the earthly frame, and enter for a time into the spirit world. It is an excel-

lent illustration of one mode of the modern manifestations, and the facts of the relation must either be denied or admitted as evidence of the spirit of a living person communing with one that had finally departed, and entered his prepared mansion.

"The kindness which the Lord showed unto her in that hour," was the kindness which he has showed unto all in endowing us with a spiritual nature, "after his own image," and capable of exercising, under proper conditions, even while on earth, a portion of its peculiar powers, or of being drawn by strong affinity to accompany for a time a loved departing spirit.

To show that it is not altogether "unquakerish," to believe in the *outward* manifestation of spiritual power and presence, which is another mode of the "modern mysteries," we quote briefly from an account published by Wm. Howitt, of a haunted house, at Willington, near New Castle, England, belonging to one Joseph Proctor, who is spoken of as a substantial member of the Society of Friends.

The hauntings are represented to consist, at times, of loud noises, or heavy blows, as of a pavior's hammer, on other occasions, of persons walking over the house, sometimes with a plainly to be perceived bodily form, coming out of a solid wall, and again re-entering. The disturbances mostly occur at night, but occasionally in open day.

Thus speaks Joseph Proctor, in correspondence with a certain Dr. Drury, who had visited the place, for the vain purpose of being enabled to explain away all the mysteries. It is well for some of the moderns who make the same fruitless efforts, that they do not, like Dr. Drury, have to be carried from the spot, "in an agony of fear and terror."

"WILLINGTON, 7 mo. 9, 1840.

"RESPECTED FRIEND, E. DRURY: Having been at Sunderland, I did not receive thine of the 6th, till yesterday morning. I am glad thou art getting well over the effects of thy unlooked-for visitation. I hold in respect thy bold and manly assertion of the truth, in the face of that ridicule and *ignorant conceit* with which that which is called the supernatural, in the present day, is usually assailed.

"I shall be glad to receive thy detail, in which it will be needful to be very particular in showing that thou couldst not be asleep, or attacked by nightmare, or mistake a reflection of the candle, as some sagaciously suppose.

"I remain, respectfully, thy friend,

"JOSH. PROCTOR.

"P. S.—I have about thirty witnesses to various things which

cannot be satisfactorily accounted for, on any other principle than that of spiritual agency."

We think the rebuke contained in this letter will apply to the conceited ignorant and conceited wise of the present year, as well as to those of the year, 1840; and will only add, that as far as we have been able to learn, Joseph Proctor was not persecuted by his fellow-members of the Quakers for endeavoring to ascertain some natural explanation of the perplexing circumstances, or for avowing "his entire conviction after an experience of fifteen years that no such elucidation was possible."

As a third illustration, and one especially applicable to the present discussion, since it is an example of spiritual impression made upon the mind, and that being more particularly the mode of manifestation to which our attention was directed, we extract the following relation from "The Friend," published in Philadelphia in 1848, as contained in a compilation by a conspicuous member of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, of various interesting historical sketches, headed "Thomas Scattergood and his Times."

"On the afternoon of the 12th day of the sixth month, 1814, whilst at home at Burlington, Sarah Dillwyn observed her husband sitting with such a peculiar and awful expression of countenance, as to create an alarm in her affectionate heart. She immediately approached him, and in the kind carefulness of love inquired what was the matter. In answering her question, he said, *he was very sorry she had disturbed him, for he had at that time been visited by Jacob Lindley's spirit!* That day Jacob Lindley, in usual health, had attended his own meeting at New-Garden, in Chester County—more than fifty miles from Burlington. In the meeting he was engaged in a living, powerful testimony, wherein he intimated his conviction that there were those present, who would not see the light of another day; and added, 'Perhaps it may be myself!' As he returned to his home from a visit that afternoon, by a sudden jolt he was thrown out of his chair into the road, and fell upon his head. Being a heavy man his neck was dislocated, and his spirit was thereby suddenly released from the shackles of mortality. *This anecdote, which seems to demonstrate the reality of spiritual intercourse, is somewhat akin to those related in our last number.*"

Now we could scarce ask better ground upon which to build our proof that spiritual communion has not been deemed inconsistent even with modern Quakerism, than is here presented, or a better fact to prove the reality and illustrate the nature of the subject. It is one of those facts which, when well established, is worth a thousand failures. "I am sorry thou hast disturbed me, for I have just been visited by Jacob Lindley's spirit," is

the expression rendered in the first person. George Dillwyn's meaning is plain : he does not say, and he did not mean, that he had a *sense* miraculously given him that Jacob Lindley was dead, as some endeavor to explain it, but, simply, according to the words, "*I have just been visited.*" There are no alternatives, but either to admit that the disembodied spirit of Jacob Lindley impressed the mind of George Dillwyn, or to deny the fact altogether, and to say it was a mere accidental coincidence, and assert that G. D. was deceived, was crazy, was hysterical, monomaniac, or one of the hundred epithets that are now used upon similar occasions.

There being many circumstances of like character upon record, we have no reason to doubt its authenticity, and consider it as above implied an instance of the strongest character. J. L. was in usual health, and G. D., it is presumable, had not the remotest outward cause for expecting his death; the probability, therefore, mathematically considered, is more than ten thousand to one that the matter was not the result of a mere coincidence in time between the accidental death of J. L. and a peculiar conceit on the part of G. D.

It is also worthy of remark, that the spiritual visitation was accompanied by the same abnormal condition and semi-trance like state,—the same peculiar expression of countenance that are observed at the present day, liable also to outward interruption as is now well understood. The expression, "I am sorry thou hast disturbed me," is full of meaning. To the discerning mind, it shows that this impression upon the mind of G. D. was not miraculously produced by an Almighty Power, in the contravention of established law, but resulted from finite agency, operating under favorable conditions, and susceptible of being disturbed by finite causes. Here is a simple re-statement of the circumstance in another form: Jacob Lindley's spirit suddenly freed from its mortal clogs, suddenly born into more perfect life, turned to the friends it had left, and finding one of them in a proper inward condition of mind, he formed a union with his spirit, "entered into rapport with him," and had it not been for the too early interruption, we know not how lengthy might have been the communion. Little, we judge, did G. D. think he was transgressing the discipline of the Society in which he held such a conspicuous place, in thus submitting his mind to the influence of his departed friend, or that honest-intentioned persons would at a future day be disowned by the Society for advocating the truth of what he experienced.

Now, mark the expression of the compiler of the above relation: "*This anecdote, which seems to demonstrate the reality of spiritual intercourse.*" Here is as much as we have ever said;



we also have seen what "*seems to demonstrate*" its reality. Consider that this remark is contained in *The Friend*, the organ of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, subjected to the strictest supervision and most watchful care that all it contains shall be consistent with the doctrines of Friends. This relation and these remarks are not known to have been criticised or censured, and may therefore be considered as adopted by the Society. Where, then, stand we now? If the Society of Friends now disown its members for "professing to hold communion with departed spirits," or for "advocating the doctrine" of so doing, let it show its consistency, by first censuring the memory of George Dillwyn, and avowing its disunity with his statements and practice; and second, by requiring of the compiler, now a member, a "Galilean" recantation of the above expression, or otherwise disowning him also.

It will be observed in the extract last considered, that allusion is made to relations in a previous number of "*The Friend*" of a somewhat similar character, a brief reference to a portion of which may not conflict with our present purpose. One is concerning the same George Dillwyn having stated in a public meeting his interior perception that a certain woman friend, by name, Susanna Horn, had arrived safely in England, her native land, which circumstance may be safely set down as an example of the exercise of the "clairvoyant faculty," or, in other words, a seeing by that spiritual sense, through its appropriate medium of sight, which we will all fully exercise and understand when our spirits burst their "cerements," and need no longer to use the bodily organs of perception.

Another relates how a certain minister, by name Martha Routh, was enabled to perceive, when absent from home, of the death by drowning of a near member of her family, and unto whom the voice was, "Be not over much troubled; he is taken from the evil to come, and is entered into rest and peace." We agree with the compiler in this instance also, which is evidently "somewhat akin to Jacob Lindley's visit," and further demonstrative of "the reality of spiritual intercourse;" the comforting assurance alluded to being no doubt a genuine impression from an exalted spiritual intelligence.

We are aware of the cry that is raised, that these were holy men and holy women, unto whom such things were miraculously revealed by the Omnipotent Mind; that it is not for the common herd to be thus favored. We are aware, also, of the use that, through ignorance, is made of such occurrences by leading members of Friends' Society, first to enslave their own minds, and then the minds of their younger members, by an undefined and superstitious dread, that tends to stifle free thought and free

investigation. Would that our weak voice might incite them to study more closely the constitution of their external and internal natures, as revealed in the records of the past and in the unfoldings of the present; soon would they find confirmed the truth that "God is no respecter of persons," and that he does not lightly, for personal favor to frail beings like us, interfere with his established laws. Whoever duly examines with a calm and unbiassed mind, the many accounts of occurrences similar to those herein related, found amongst all societies and in every age of the world, will discover that these faculties of "interior sight" and susceptibility to spiritual impression, are not confined, alone, to those considered as the extra-righteous of the earth, and entitled to especial favor; but are developed more in accordance with certain peculiarities of bodily and mental constitution.

Much would we delight to go on and endeavor to explain more fully the nature of this highly interesting subject, the development of which is hailed with joy by many a benighted mind; but we are constantly reminded that the present object is not so much to prove its accordance with everlasting truth as manifested in God's holy temple—the universe—in its oneness of material and spiritual union; but to show merely that a belief in spiritual impression from human beings in another life is not inconsistent with Quakerism.

This, we think, has been sufficiently accomplished, and our persecutors have left them scarce a plank to stand upon. Much of the erroneous position taken by them may, perhaps, be owing to the fact that they and their prompters have heard strange stories, perhaps seen strange doctrines promulgated as belonging to this subject, and have unwisely attributed them unto us as a matter of course. This gives a good opportunity to say that we stand accountable for what we ourselves alone build upon this matter, and not for what every enthusiast may say concerning it. If some should suffer themselves to become excited, even to insanity, as is not improbable, they will not be the first who have become monomaniacs in a good cause, and we can but lament their misfortune. If any should prostitute the subject to the "lucre of gain," it is but a "preaching for hire and a divining for money," against which we bear a testimony.

In further explanation of our position, it may be said that the most intelligent portion of those interested in these investigations do not expect to discover a new and especial dispensation of Providence in permitting the spiritual to commune with what is termed the material world. It has been said "There is nothing new under the sun," and such manifestations have, probably, taken place, more or less, in all ages and amongst all nations; but mankind were in most instances unprepared for them, and

either ran wild in the excess of ignorant and superstitious credulity, or discarded them altogether, and sunk into the opposite extreme of cold and hopeless materialism. We trust now, however, that the time is fast approaching when, in the words of a modern writer, "The contemptuous scepticism of the last age is yielding to a more humble spirit of inquiry," and as Beattie beautifully expresses—

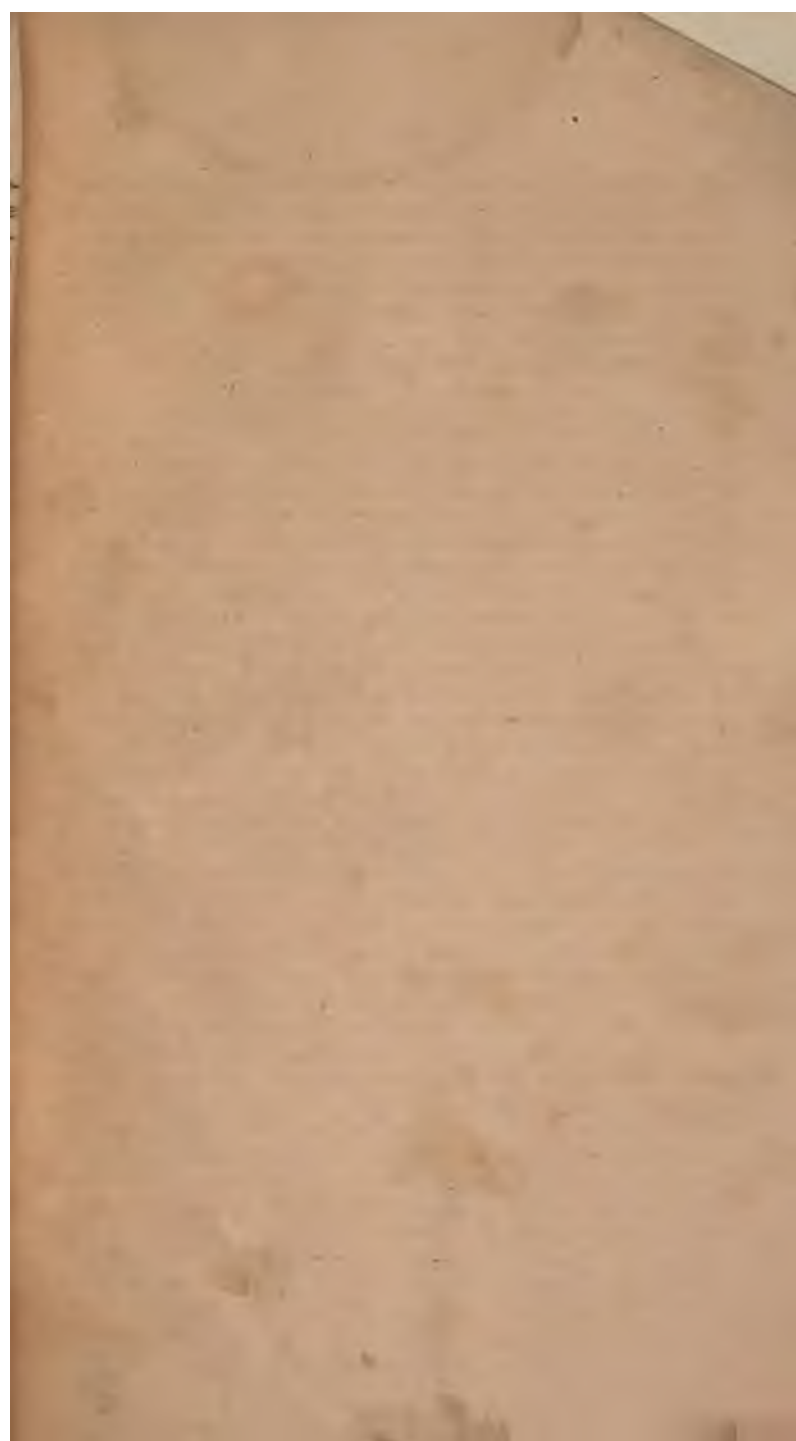
"Reason now through *Nature*, Time, and Space,  
Darts the keen lustre of her serious eye;  
And learns from facts compared the laws to trace,  
Whose long progression leads to Deity."

Regarding the subject, then, as the result of laws inherent in the constitution of the world, discovered and developed as the minds of men are prepared to be benefitted by them, we think there may be perceived in their unfoldings, when fully realized, the banishing from earth of many dark and gloomy superstitions; the reconciling of many "truths hard to be understood;" the confirming of the sceptical in a rational faith in the soul's immortality; the uniting of mankind in more perfect harmony, and the hastening of the day when "the sword shall be beaten into the ploughshare, and the spear into the pruning hook," and man knowing more perfectly his own nature and his own destiny, will be enabled the better to fulfil it in accordance with the laws of his being, to his own great gain, and to the glorifying of his Maker.

We stand accountable, therefore, in our original position of free, scientific investigators of natural truths; accountable unto God and ourselves for the just use of the faculties which he has given; accountable unto our fellow-men so far that we are bound to share with them whatever of truth we may glean from the great harvest-field. And here allow us to add, in conclusion, to all who may chance to read these pages, especially to the younger members of our Society: pursue, we entreat you, the same free course; look not, alone, to the withered stubble-field of ages past, whose fruit, mete for the day of its growth, hath long since been garnered; but cultivate assiduously, also, the green corn of the present, neglecting not the ears that are ripe and ready for the gathering.

Truth's unbroken field is also before you; put your hands to the plough; look not back, but, with a steady eye to the unturned furrow, press forward with faith and hope, and ye will in due time reap an abundant harvest.

J. C. JACKSON,  
J. G. JACKSON,  
E. JACKSON,  
J. J. GRIFFITH.

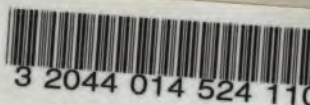












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